Korcha

361 • 438 ORÇA (sometimes referred to as Korcha and also as Koritsa) is the central terminus for Albania. It lies in one of the most fertile plains of Central Albania which is under intense cultivation. This causes Korça to be rich industrially for here are located three tobacco factories, a large sawmill and an alcohol factory. Near Korça are rich coal mines, vineyards, and so forth.

Several of the principal roads connecting Albania with Yugoslavia on the north and with Greece on the south and east meet here. To this valued and fortunate location Korça owes her importance and her development into an exceedingly up-to-date center for trade and traffic which enables her to transport materials of all kinds to and from all parts of the country.

The King Pyrrhus, of historic renown, was born in this district in which the city of Korça now stands.

342 Each home in Korça is surrounded by a garden enclosed with a wall made of light-colored stones giving the residences an appearance of wealth.

485 with cooking privileges at the fireplace, while the host brews coffee for sale, and also dispenses *raki*. After his guests are in for the night he locks the door, and cannot ordinarily be persuaded to unlock it before morning, no matter how urgent the needs of the guests to go outside. This precaution is necessary owing to the frequency of violence.

Some of the *hanjis* are local men. Others come from Kruja, the home of innkeepers. All of them live as bachelors. This system, like the *kiragi* business, brings a certain number of outsiders into the country. All in all there are probably 12 to 18 *hans* in Ghegnia, in addition to the one European-style hotel at
574 Peshkopia. The Catholics do not use this system; in their tribal areas guests are put up by important individuals through a system of re-
[628] ciprocal hospitality. Since local feuds are usually more prevalent in Catholic than in Moslem country, travel across the former is relatively light.

● 438 There remains only the question of trade, which has been partly covered.[1] On the whole it may be said of the mountain Ghegs that they live by a regional, or geographic, and perhaps also ethnic, division of labor. The ordinary man is a farmer, who produces firewood, cereals, legumes, tobacco, wool, milk products, and sometimes wooden spoons. His wife produces cloth, crocheted stockings, embroidered scarfs, baskets, eggs, and a few other local products. These mountain products find their way to the market towns. Usually men and women come together; sometimes only the women make the trip, and sometimes the whole family stays at home, sending the goods by a *kiragi*.[2]

The Ghegs are able to export these things because they produce a slight surplus of agricultural products. One reason for the surplus may be that they use a number of labor-saving devices, including fulling and mealing mills run by water power.[3] This gives them more time for other pursuits, but does not increase their complexity of relations at home, since the mills are small and serve individual groups of related families.

1 [See cat 116, pp. 20a-20b --Analyst]
2 [See cat 116, pp 20a-20b Analyst]
3 [See cat 116 pp 17b-18a --Analyst]

438 On the other side of the picture lie the craftsmen and shopkeepers in the towns, some Albanian, others Turkish, others Serbian. These craftsmen live off the exports from the mountains and from the other agricultural regions around them, and supply the mountaineers with their needs, including firearms and ammunition, as well as the objects previously listed.

So far the picture is simple, mountaineers on one side of the fence, townsmen on the other. A mountaineer may become a townsman, but never the reverse. At several points, however, the security of the mountains is penetrated: by the itinerant masons who build *kullas*,[1] by the *hanjis*[2] and *kiragis*[3] who handle traffic and care for travelers, and by the shopkeepers, who are themselves usually Ghegs, and who are found in the larger tribal villages, usually but one to a settlement. I can recall but one in Mirdita, none in Shoshi, while in the country villages of Dibra, Luma, and Puka, along the main roads, there were several. These men sold tea and sugar, needles and thread, cigarette papers, salt and pepper, a little candy, candles, kerosene, kerchiefs, and matches. They saved a trip to town for minor purchases.

511 With this balance of production and trade,[4] the Ghegs barely succeed in making a living. If their average income could be accurately assessed, it would be one of the lowest in Europe. The ordinary farmer has just enough clothing to cover his family. In some cases I have seen brothers with one suit between them; one had to stay indoors while the other went out. This was in Merturi. The ordinary household has just enough food to get through the year, saving the next year's seed and selling a little in the town. Many houses are the scenes of tightened belts and near starvation every spring. Since there is no knowledge of contraception, many children are born. As ideas of sanitation are also lacking, many people die, and the population is always a little greater than the threshold of tolerance. Feuds, sudden death, and emigration are necessary safety valves. Another very recent one is enlistment in the gendarmerie.

[842]
[165]

1 [See Cat. 116, pp. 14b – 15a -- Analyst]
2 [See cat 116, pp. 20b - 21a -- Analyst]
3 [See cat. 116, pp. 20a - 20b - Analyst]
4 [See cat. 116 pp 21a – b -- Analyst]

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Albania EGL

To the Land of the Eagle

361 the Elbasan streets. And there is always a noise of hammer-
438 ing.[1] The blacksmiths are at work—hammering. The tinsmiths are at work—hammering. The silversmiths are at work—hammering. The carpenters and joiners are planing, sawing, or hammering. The cobblers are stitching and hammering. Wherever you go your ears are assailed by the sounds of toil—honest, pleasant sounds far removed from the noises of a modern mill or factory. As I listened I thought of the thousands of folk at home who have to spend hours every day merely watching or feeding a machine—nothing to interest them, no pride in their work, no thought in their minds save escape at the end of the day. How much better off are these workers of Elbasan! And yet the Albanian is always grumbling because he has no factories. To have factories is the summit of his ambition. Factories—and then the millennium! If only he had factories! Factories! Then everybody would have work, everybody would have money, everybody would be thoroughly happy. So, in his folly and blindness, he thinks.

One has only to travel in countries where everything is made by hand to regret the invention of machinery. Economists, no doubt, will argue that it is wrong to do so. Machinery, they will say, enables work to be done quicker and cheaper, gives the worker leisure to improve his mind and to enjoy life, provides the means of trading with other countries, and adds to the wealth of the nation. It may be so. But that does not alter the fact that hand-made goods are always better than similar goods which are turned out by

[1] [In Elbasan -- Analyst]